

district, for some 8,700 acres of now privately-owned land in other parts of the State of Colorado.

The current BLM-owned lands near Blackhawk are very fragmented and unmanageable, and really do not lend themselves at all to the normal sorts of appraisal and transfer processes that involve expensive surveys and all the rest. This bill enables both the Government and some interests that are proposing private development near Blackhawk to make a match that will be in everyone's long-term interest.

The three major tracts that will be acquired by the Federal Government in exchange for these properties involve a very important 40 acres within Rocky Mountain National Park known as the Circle C Church Camp, an area that the Park Service has been anxious to bring under Park Service management for a long time; about 4,000 acres along the La Jara Canyon in Conejos County, again, important for both management, wildlife, and recreational purposes; and some 4,700 acres in Huerfano County, again involving very important scenic, recreational, and wildlife habitat areas in a beautiful canyon there.

This is legislation that I think has no opponents and has all of the right proponents, including all of the interested parties in the State of Colorado, the local governments, and all the rest. Again, I thank all involved in this on the Committee on Resources for their assistance in moving it along, and I urge my colleagues to vote for it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the subcommittee chairman, Mr. HANSEN, and Ranking Member BILL RICHARDSON for bringing this bill to the floor today. I appreciate their good work, and I also greatly appreciate all that my colleague from Colorado, Mr. MCINNIS, has done in connection with this legislation that affects both our districts. I am very glad to have had the chance to work with him on this bill.

This is a straightforward and I believe a noncontroversial measure. It provides for a land exchange under which the public will receive more than 8,700 acres of Colorado lands that are important for recreational and environmental purposes, in exchange for about 300 acres near the town of Black Hawk, in Gilpin County, that are appropriate for development.

Under the exchange, the Gilpin County lands, located in my congressional district, would be transferred from Federal ownership to Lake Gulch, Inc., a private firm, in exchange for Lake Gulch's transfer to the United States of the other lands specified in the bill.

These Gilpin County lands comprise 133 separate parcels, ranging in size from 38 acres to one one-hundredth of an acre—in fact, 90 of them are less than an acre. These lands were originally acquired by the United States from France through the Louisiana Purchase. After the discovery of gold in Gilpin County, most of the immediately adjacent lands—also Federal public domain lands acquired in the same way—were claimed under the mining laws and thus passed into private ownership.

However, the 133 parcels covered by the bill are still in the public domain. For the most

part, they are left-over fragments, intermingled with private lands. They are essentially unmanageable, and have been identified as suitable for disposal by the Bureau of Land Management. That means that BLM has the legal authority to dispose of them for fair market value.

The problem, though, is that the fragmented nature of the lands, and the resulting very small size of many tracts, makes it very difficult for the Government to obtain that fair market value because of the high costs of surveys and other necessary administrative expenses.

This bill responds to that problem. It will enable the United States to realize the value of these Gilpin County lands by transferring them to the Lake Gulch corporation in exchange for other lands of equal value that have resources, including potential for recreational uses, which give them priority status for acquisition by Federal land-management agencies.

These lands that the United States will receive include: About 40 acres within Rocky Mountain National Park—known as the "Circle C Church Camp" tract—that has been a long-time acquisition priority for the National Park Service; nearly 4,000 acres in Conejos County—known as the Quinlan Ranches parcel, bordering on the scenic La Jara Canyon, that is intermingled with Federal lands managed by the BLM and the Forest Service and that has recreational values as well as elk winter range and other wildlife habitat; and about 4,700 acres—known as the Bonham Ranch, now intermingled with BLM-managed lands along Cucharas Canyon in Huerfano County, whose acquisition will enable BLM to protect more than 5 miles of the scenic canyon, with its important wildlife habitat—including raptor nesting areas, cultural resources, and recreational uses.

The bill also would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to agree to transfer certain additional adjacent Gilpin County lands in exchange for additional lands acceptable to the Secretary or payment of the fair market value of any such additional Gilpin County lands.

I want to stress that the bill authorizes only an equal-value exchange. If it's determined that the value of the Gilpin County lands is greater than the value of the lands transferred to the United States, Lake Gulch will be required to pay the difference. Any such payment would be used to acquire from willing sellers land or water rights in the BLM-managed Blanca wetlands near Alamosa, an area with crucial winter habitat for bald eagles and a very productive area for ducks and geese.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is good for economic development in Gilpin County and good for the environment and outdoor recreation in Colorado. The administration supports the bill, and it also has the support of Governor Romer, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and affected local governments including Black Hawk, Central City, and Gilpin County, as well as local and national environmental and conservation organizations. I urge its passage by the House.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the Gilpin County land parcels currently managed by the BLM consist of 133 parcels ranging in size from one-tenth acre to 38 acres. I think, as the gentleman from Colorado

[Mr. SKAGGS] mentioned, this bill is pretty straight forward. These are fragments scattered in an area crisscrossed with patent and mining claims, making their management extremely difficult.

What this legislation does, it would authorize an equal value land exchange, and my colleague, the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. SKAGGS], as I said, has worked for some time on this issue with the administration and the local parties affected. I commend the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. MCINNIS], too, for his efforts, and my colleagues on the majority side. This bill has wide support.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of passage, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

For the record, Mr. Speaker, I want to state that the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. MCINNIS] wanted to be here, but he could not make it here today. I would note that for the record. I also want to thank the gentlemen from Colorado, Mr. MCINNIS and Mr. SKAGGS, for their cooperative work on this issue. I think it is time we straightened up these small parcels and get some uniformity. I think this is a good piece of legislation, and I appreciate the statements made by the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. RICHARDSON]. I think it is helpful in a bipartisan way to get some of this straightened out.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. COOLEY] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2437, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1545

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the 7 measures just considered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAYS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oregon?

There was no objection.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule 1, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 45 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 6 p.m.